



News Release

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
Tracy L. Wareing, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR CPS WORKERS TO BE REVIEWED

PHOENIX – (May 15, 2007) Department of Economic Security Director Tracy L. Wareing today called for an immediate review of DES policies regarding Child Protective Services case managers and appropriate professional standards, including a review of any related state personnel rules.

Wareing said this stems from a current internal review of a past personnel situation regarding a CPS worker personally involved with a former client.

“CPS case managers are professionals and must be held to the highest professional standards,” Wareing stated. “Our internal review of the personnel situation has led us to question whether current rules and policies are sufficient to allow the agency to take action against those who violate those standards, and whether the standards themselves go far enough in providing clear direction to staff on what their involvement with former clients should be.”

Neither Wareing nor Ken Deibert, DES Deputy Director of the Division of Children, Youth and Families (which oversees CPS), were with DES at the time that the situation in question was investigated. The internal investigation conducted in 2005 found no merit to the allegations because any alleged relationship between the parties involved in the complaint occurred over one year after the client’s initial involvement with CPS ended. Accordingly, DES did not take any disciplinary action against the employee. Wareing said she is not second-guessing that investigation, merely questioning whether the rules and policies that governed those decisions are sufficient.

State personnel rules and agency policies do not prohibit CPS case managers from being personally involved with clients with whom they are no longer professionally involved. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, which all CPS case managers are held to, disallows personal involvement with current clients and discourages relationships with former clients.

“The NASW standards are intended to be a guide, and were not intended to address specific situations,” Wareing said. “But, we can work with those standards to make changes to agency policies that speak specifically to Arizona’s expectations of staff employed by CPS and recommendations to the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) for changes to state personnel rules.”

Wareing said the review will include asking national social work or child welfare experts to review state personnel rules and CPS policies. It will also include a review of other states’ policies or laws regarding standards of conduct for social workers or other professionals.

Once the review is concluded, Wareing said DES officials will make any necessary changes to agency policies, and will work with the Arizona Department of Administration and state legislators if legal changes are required.

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